



# District Councillors' Annual Report to the meeting of Playford Parish Council

For May 2021

## Carlford and Fynn Valley Ward.

Rushmere Village, Great Bealings, Little Bealings, Playford, Bredfield, Grundisburgh & Culpho, Witnesham and Swilland, Westerfield, Hasketon, Clopton, Charsfield, Dallinghoo, Tuddenham, Boulge, Burgh, Debach, Otley.

## From District Councillor

### Cllr Colin Hedgley

This past year has been overshadowed by the Covid pandemic and as such a great deal of monthly reports that I have produced for the Carlford and Fynn Valley Parish Councils have centred around news of the help available for people and businesses.

However the political year started in May 2019 when I became the first Chairman of East Suffolk Council, a position usually held for twelve months. Of course in May 2020 the pandemic was upon us and it was decided to extend my term of office until October 2020. During the previous eighteen months I carried out many civic duties across Suffolk and met a great many amazing people working hard for the benefit of others, mostly without any financial reward and giving a great deal of their own time. I also carried out the bread and butter duties of opening playgrounds and attending AGMs of charities within the East Suffolk area. At the start of the pandemic it was agreed that each councillor should donate £2000 of their community enabling fund to the newly formed ESC Hardship Fund that was then used to help out residents that had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own. This was carefully and wisely distributed. In addition I personally contributed my Chairman's expenses allowance to the Hardship Fund. My Enabling Communities Budget report can be found later in this paper.

I handed over the Chairmanship to my successor in October 2020.

## Simplified parking tariffs now in place

Following a delay caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, East Suffolk Council has now practically completed the taking over of all car parking in the district - including a simplified pricing structure and free half hour parking across a number of sites.

Reducing over 50 different price points to just three or four main ticket types across the district, the new price structure have seen prices reduced or frozen in over 70% of cases. Additionally, the council has introduced 30 minutes free parking in a number of car parks to support people who have told us that they make regular short visits. This will also support local businesses who will benefit from drivers making quick turnarounds in our car parks.



East Suffolk Council introduced the new tariffs in a staggered roll out, with signs erected to indicate the new charges, which started in Bungay in August 2019.

East Suffolk Council is also continuing to make the best use of technology to improve services by making them more efficient, and has seen an increase of 129% on contactless payments in its car parks as visitors take advantage of the simple RingGo app to park with ease and confidence.

Available in all East Suffolk's car parks, RingGo is a quick and easy to use mobile phone service which lets people pay for their parking with a credit or debit card, via an app, rather than using cash at the machine. This means that drivers no longer need to queue at the machine or handle cash to pay for their parking.

Whilst there used to be a convenience fee of 20p to use the app, East Suffolk Council covers this cost, so drivers do not get charged extra for using this payment option. There is however a small extra charge if drivers choose to opt in to receive SMS reminders, of when your time is running out.

To register with RingGo and go contactless, go to <https://ringgo.co.uk/>.

**Parking management** moved from the police to East Suffolk Council in April 2020, to improve parking locally and tackle nuisance and unlawful parking, enabling the Council to address the parking problems that are affecting communities the most.

Alongside this, the Council also reviewed how it administrated on-street parking permits, exemptions and dispensations. As a result of this, a new digital system has been put in place, enabling residents and others to apply for and manage permits online. The system also recognises valid permits from a vehicle's registration number, meaning that permit holders will no longer need to remember to display their permits.

## Remember to bin it.

Residents and visitors spending time at East Suffolk's beaches, open spaces and countryside are being urged to dispose of their rubbish responsibly.

With the holidays hopefully to start later this year, East Suffolk Council is encouraging people to use the extra bins provided at beaches, parks and other popular open spaces in the district. East Suffolk Norse has installed additional waste bins in popular areas and are emptying all litter bins more frequently.

However, people are reminded that their rubbish is their responsibility and are asked to help keep East Suffolk beautiful, by disposing of their rubbish either in the nearest litter bin or if there is not a bin, or the bin is already full, by taking it home. People are also asked not to leave rubbish beside bins which although well meaning, is still a form of littering.

## Work on new seafront cafe nearing completion.

Work on a new café/restaurant in the heart of Felixstowe's South Seafront is now well advanced – bringing a new exciting resort experience to the area. Local building company, Barnes Construction, started work on the new landmark building in August last year, with the development estimated to be completed in summer 2021.



## Melton Hill case dismissed

East Suffolk Council successfully defended its decision to grant planning permission to develop homes at the site of former offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge. A Judge in the Administrative Court dismissed all of the claims made against the Council and found that its approach to the granting of planning consent was lawful.

With full Planning Consent in place, East Suffolk Council will now begin the process of marketing the site to interested developers, bringing much needed housing to the area in a prime location.

## Recovery

The Economic Development and Regeneration team continue to pursue their long-term economic growth programmes which will ensure we are well placed to recover strongly and build back better and greener from the Covid downturn.

This includes the Towns Revitalisation initiative, Smart Towns Programme, Lowestoft Town Investment Plan, Sizewell C Economic Development Programme, exploring opportunities for an ES hydrogen economy, Freeports initiatives, delivering the Felixstowe Vision and supporting the new Felixstowe BID. This bid has now been successful and Felixstowe will become a Freeport.

In addition to these programmes, we are also developing specific business support schemes to enable start-up businesses, introduce a full fibre voucher scheme to enable businesses to connect to new ultrafast network in Lowestoft and looking at capital investments to support our ambitions to develop an energy campus linked to SZC and the emerging hydrogen economy.

We also continue to work with partners at the Local Enterprise Partnership and across the county to cover Suffolk and region wide economic recovery programmes that build on our existing sector strengths and emerging economic growth opportunities.

## Supporting businesses

### COVID Business Grants

In total, since the launch of a plethora of new business grants in November 2020, ESC has made over 17,000 separate payments totalling £35.9m to businesses struggling due to enforced closure or severe restrictions on trading. Since the beginning of the pandemic the Council has allocated over £102m of grants.

Following the PM's announcement on the route map out of lockdown, a further £9.4m of COVID business grant funding has been allocated to ESC to cover the period 16 February – 31 March. These payments are now being issued and in the vast majority of cases automatically to all eligible businesses.

Businesses in the East Suffolk hospitality sector are also now receiving the new hospitality grant worth up to £9k per business. This is not a central government mandated grant but



instead a decision taken by ESC reflecting the severe pressure this sector had faced and its importance to our local communities and the visitor economy. Over £1.6m has now been issued to businesses in the hospitality sector through this new grant.

From 1 April Restart grants have been launched aimed at supporting the reopening of non-essential retail and hospitality/ accommodation providers, leisure, personal care and gyms. For non-essential retail, grants will be worth up to £6k and for hospitality etc will be worth up to £18k. These are to be one-off payments and only for businesses who are on the ratings list. For businesses who are not rated a top up to ESC's allocation from the ASRG fund will be made available – we are still awaiting details of the size of the Council's allocation. The current allocation of £7.2m has to be distributed to businesses by 30 June.

## Enabling Communities Budget

As ever I am always open to requests from community organisations that need funding for new projects.

Date	Amount	Group/Organisation	Project
23rd August 2020	£2,000	Great Bealings Parish Council	Funding towards the publication of a local history book of Great and Little Bealings
16th November 2020	£1,000	Hasketon Parish Council	To purchase a projector and screen for meetings.
4th December 2020	£1,000	Tuddenham St Martin Parish Council	To purchase a projector and laptop for Parish meetings
9th December 2020	£1,000	Great Bealings Parish Council	Funding towards Boot Street 30mph speed limit extension
19th January 2021	£138	Little Bealings Parish Council	Funding towards SIDs brackets.
19th January 2021	£138	Playford Parish Council	Funding towards SIDs



			brackets.
19th February 2021	£224	Little Bealings Parish Council	Funding towards the hire of cherry picker to refurbish the war memorial

## 2020/21

### Latest News

#### Overview

In the week up to April 21 there have been 151 new cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk. This is a rise on the numbers in the previous week.

The underlying rate of new weekly cases in Suffolk has decreased slightly and is now at 18.5 cases per 100,000 people. This rate remains below the rates for the East of England region (21.2 / 100,000) and for England as a whole (24.8 / 100,000).

In total, up to April 9, 2021, which is the latest data from ONS, there have been 1,551 deaths in Suffolk where COVID-19 was recorded on the death certificate. There have been four COVID-19 related deaths in the seven days up to April 9.

The estimated 'R' value for the East of England is between 0.7 and 1.0. This value has stayed the same compared to the previous week. The estimated 'R' value for England as a whole, has also remained the same this week (0.8– 1.0). Any R value greater than 1 means the epidemic is no longer decreasing.

#### Weekly Cases and Rates

COVID-19 cases are identified by taking specimens from people which are then tested, either using a PCR test which is processed in a lab, or by using a rapid lateral flow device.

Positive rapid lateral flow test results can be confirmed with PCR tests taken within 72 hours. If the PCR test results are negative, these are no longer reported as cases. This policy was reintroduced in England on March 29, 2021. On April 9, 2021, a total of 116 cases with specimen dates after November 1, 2020, were removed from Suffolk's cumulative total retrospectively due to meeting this criteria.

In the week up to April 21, 2021 there were 151 new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk, an increase on the 114 cases of the previous week. The most recent underlying weekly case rate in Suffolk was 18.5 cases per 100,000 people. This is a fall on the 20.2 case rate of the previous week.



In the last week of reported data, up to April 21 there have been 17 cases in Babergh, 48 cases in East Suffolk, 38 cases in Ipswich, 18 cases in Mid Suffolk and 31 cases in West Suffolk.

### **Total Cases and Rates**

As of April 14, 2021 there have been 30,008 total lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk. In total there have been 3,941.4 cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people.

### **Business Grants**

In total, since the launch of a plethora of new business grants in November 2020, ESC has made payments of more than £40m to businesses struggling due to enforced closure or severe restrictions on trading. In terms of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) this means we have now allocated over 86% of ESC's total pot, well above the national average and on course to meet the government's 30 June deadline to have allocated all ARG monies. Since the beginning of the pandemic the Council has allocated £106m of grants. From 1 April ESC launched its Restart Grants Fund which provides grants to supporting the reopening of non-essential retail and hospitality/ accommodation providers, leisure, personal care and gyms.

For non-essential retail, grants are worth up to £6k and for hospitality etc are worth up to £18k. These will be one-off payments and only for businesses who are on the ratings list. Authorities across Suffolk have identified significant organised fraud in relation to these grants and as such ESC is undertaking additional anti-fraud measures which unfortunately is delaying the issuing of these grants.

Businesses which are not rated will receive a similar Restart Grant payment from the ARG fund. We have been told by government that this fund will be topped up by £1.74 if the current allocation of £7.2m is fully distributed to businesses by 30 June.

The government has also recently announced the 'Welcome Back Fund' - £56m being made available to Councils to safely welcome back residents and visitors to high streets and coastal resorts. The funding can cover temporary measures such as signage, public realm improvements, promotional campaigns and support for events for up to 12 months or for as long as restrictions are in place. ESC has been allocated £287k and once final guidance has been received from government the ED team will be working with Town Councils and Business Improvement Districts to develop plans for the implementation of this fund. All the information relating to Covid business grants can be found on ESC's Covid business support webpage [COVID-19: business grant funding » East Suffolk Council](#).



## Environmental services – food and safety as restrictions ease

On 12 April, England entered Step 2 of the Government roadmap which is the next careful step towards reopening our economy and easing COVID-19 restrictions. To support local businesses, the Food and Safety Team has sent advisory letters to help explain the new rules and to provide guidance for businesses to get up and running safely again.

The letters provide recommendations and indicate the legal responsibilities to protect staff and customers to ensure workplaces are safe to reopen and procedures are put in place to control the risk of COVID-19 infection. Recognition of symptoms, not attending the workplace if unwell and obtaining twice weekly lateral flow tests are all important aspects which are encouraged to every business.

The letter also prompts businesses to instigate cleaning protocols, post prominent signage on maximum capacity, maintain social distancing, and face covering. A new key issue for some businesses is the collection of contact details using the NHS QR code or an alternative logbook system.

In addition, to reduce virus transmission, the latest guidance on Test and Trace and links to important websites have been attached to these letters, together with details of business grant and support information.

In total 1785 businesses have been contacted by email and a further 1110 businesses in letter form. The business groups which were specifically targeted are those which were entitled to reopen on the 12 April, these being:

- **Non-essential retail shops**
- **Outdoor Hospitality premises** (this includes pubs, restaurants, cafes etc. for the **seated consumption** of food and drink on the premises)
- **Offices and similar settings**
- **Close contact services** (this includes, hairdressers, barbers, beauticians, tattooists, sports and massage therapists, dress fitters, tailors, and fashion designers).
- **Indoor and outdoor leisure & sports facilities** (this includes, outdoor sports eg water sport venues, pools, courts, pitches, golf courses, driving, archery and shooting ranges, riding centres and arenas, skating, and trampolining parks. Indoor sports and leisure facilities eg gyms, leisure centres, swimming pools)
- **Self-contained accommodation for single household use only**

Following on from these advisory letters, the Food and Safety Team are now in the process of undertaking Step 2 Spot Checks on these ranges of businesses throughout the district to ensure they are compliant with the COVID-19 Regulations and adhering to the relevant Government guidance.



## **Bar issued with fixed penalty for breaching Covid-19 restrictions**

As part of the Government's four-step roadmap, businesses in the hospitality sector were able to reopen on 12 April under the current restrictions, which are expected to remain in place until 17 May at the earliest. Under these restrictions, businesses in the hospitality sector can serve customers on the premises if seated and outdoors only. Marquees, shelters and other structures are allowed under certain conditions. To be considered outdoors, all structures can have a roof but need to have at least 50% of their wall areas open at all times while serving customers.

The rules on using marquee structures as an outdoor space are very clear. It is important that businesses get it right because outdoor settings are known to help reduce the risk of spreading the virus, making it less risky than indoor settings.

It's clear that responsible businesses are working hard to keep people safe and this will also help us all keep on course with the government's roadmap for reopening. However, after concerns were raised by members of the public, an officer from East Suffolk Council's Food and Safety team visited A Listers in Woodbridge last week and found that the bar was serving customers in a marquee which did not have the required wall areas open.

The owner was advised that he needed to either stop using the marquee or open up at least 50% of the wall areas to meet the legal requirements and the government's guidance. However, when the officer returned this week, she found that the marquee was still not correctly set up but customers were still being served in it. As a result, the owner was served with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £1,000 for breaching Covid-19 regulations.

## **Reporting concerns**

The Council's online form for reporting health and safety concerns [https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/COVID\\_19\\_Health\\_and\\_Safety](https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/COVID_19_Health_and_Safety) . Enquiries can also be made to [environment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:environment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk) .





## Coronavirus Resources

- Guidance for councils and LRFs during the coronavirus outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>
- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Coronavirus communication materials: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>
- FAQ from the Cabinet Office: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>
- National lockdown: what you need to know: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>
- Coronavirus cases: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

Your District Councillors for Playford are:-

Cllr Colin Hedgley and Cllr Tony Fryatt

29<sup>th</sup> April 2021